

Knock it Close

Trent Reeves, the director of golf instruction at The Villages Golf Academy, wants to help you score better on the golf course, and one of the best ways to do that is to master your short game. Long drives off the tee might get the lion's share of attention in golf, but those who can get up-and-down near the green reliably will see their strokes drop significantly. Below, Reeves walks you through the best technique to help you chip the ball close to the hole, improving your odds of making a short putt and quickly moving on to the next tee.



STEP ONE

CLUB SELECTION

The key to grabbing the right club ultimately comes down to a player's preference, as well as the ball's lie. If the ball is in heavy rough, maybe use a hybrid or wood, as the club will glide through the tall grass easier than a wedge, which might get caught up. No matter what club the player chooses, the following method for chipping remains the same. Master this technique and watch your scores dramatically improve.



STEP TWO

DON'T BREAK WRISTS

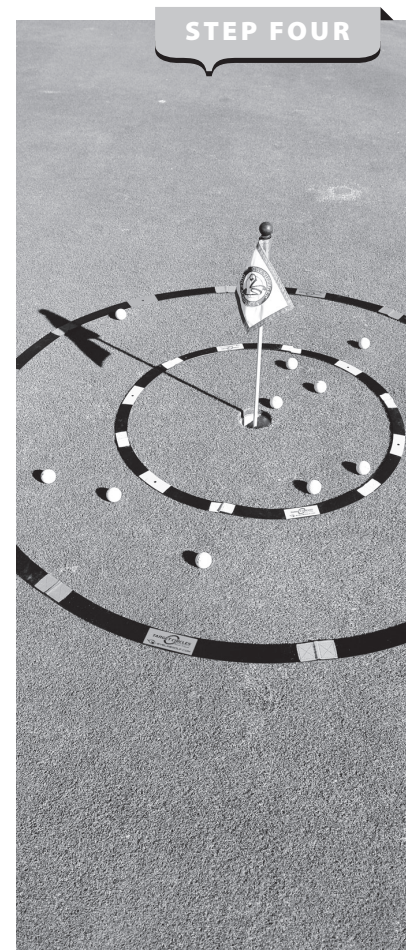
Players should closely address the ball with it positioned near the back of their stance — inside the right foot if the player is right-handed or left if left-handed, is a good guide. Players should also have their weight heavier on their lead foot. This helps ensure solid contact with the ball. When bringing the club back, it is important to not break the wrists. Having too much wrist action leads to too much power and unreliable contact, like topping the ball.



STEP THREE

USE PUTTING MOTION

The swinging motion for chipping is the same as putting, only with a little body motion. If you use the right stroke, the club's loft will do the work. With your weight forward, keep your wrists locked and rock your shoulders for a pendulum movement. Keep a 'Y' shape — formed by your shoulders coming down through your arms to your hands and then the club — through the entirety of the swing. This, again, helps ensure that you will make solid contact.



STEP FOUR

GET IT CLOSE

Having a strong short game is crucial to success on the golf course. It is 65 percent of the game and 80 percent of your score. One of the biggest issues beginning players have is using their hands to swing, not their big muscles — shoulders with a solid leg base. Not accelerating the club through contact and breaking their wrists during the swing are two other common pitfalls. Players should regularly practice their short game to help keep their scores low.



TRENT REEVES

Reeves is a dedicated Class A member of the PGA of America with more than 27 years in the golf industry. During his career, Reeves has had the opportunity to work with all levels of golfers, from beginners to professionals.

How did you get into instruction? I was playing a lot of tournament golf and people would ask me what I think about their swing. I found it very interesting and wanted to learn as much as I could about the golf swing. I quickly fell in love with helping people improve.

What is your instruction philosophy? The swing should be athletic, natural and repeatable. I believe every golfer can improve their swing but, most importantly, can lower their score by three to 12 strokes with a better short game.

What is your favorite thing about teaching in The Villages? It has to be the facilities and the residents' commitment to improving. I have traveled the country teaching for Dave Pelz and I can say the facilities at The Villages are second to none. With access to state of the art technology, climate-controlled hitting bays and great instruction, there is no excuse to not improve.

BOOK A LESSON

The staff of The Villages Golf Academy wants to help you with your game. To schedule a session with an instructor, call 352-259-8121 or 352-259-2077.